Group	*Total Strength*	*SC*	*ST*
B	372	48	5
C	8395	1257	332
D	1707	272	125
D (Safai Karamchari)	106	32	4

(d) Policy in regard to reservation of posts of SCs/STs is being followed by VSP. There are, however, backlog in vacancies in respect of certain posts which could not be filled due to non-availability of suitable SC/ST candidates. Efforts are being made to fill the backlog in vacancies from SC/ST candidates in such categories.

Sponge Iron Project at Vishakhapatnam

2408. SHRI M.V.V.S. MURTHY: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Vishakhapatnam Steel Plant has any proposal to setting up of a Sponge Iron Project; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Rise in Cost of Assam Refinery

2409. SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the cost of the Assam Refinery Project has escalated from the original estimate; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI S. KRISHAN KUMAR): (a) and (b). Against the original estimate of Rs. 1259 crores (July, 1990 prices) the cost of Assam Refinery is now estimated to the about Rs. 1799 crores (July, 1991 prices). The increase in cost is on account of normal escalation since July, 1990, devaluation of rupee, etc.

Silviculture

2410. SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are considering adoption of silviculture in preference of Agriculture by farmers whose lands were unsuited for agriculture;

(b) if so, whether a 'massive campaign' is to be launched on priority basis in this regard; and

(c) if so, salient features thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN): (a)